

Week Ending Friday, December 19, 2008

The President's Radio Address

December 13, 2008

Good morning. This week, our country received good news in the fight against illegal drugs. New data show that illicit drug use amongst young people continues to decline, and that we are making good progress in our efforts to help thousands of Americans renew their health and hope.

Substance abuse is a serious challenge for our Nation. Addiction breaks hearts, destroys families, and keeps our citizens from fulfilling their God-given potential. The drug trade also enriches our enemies and brings crime and violence to our streets. So in 2002, I committed our Nation to an ambitious effort to cut drug use by limiting demand, reducing supply, and helping addicts get treatment.

Over the past 6 years, we've made great strides toward these goals. Parents, teachers, mentors, and counselors have done fantastic work to educate children about the dangers of drug abuse. Law enforcement officers have risked their lives to cut the supply of drugs on city streets. And with help from our international partners, we're pursuing drug dealers around the world and interdicting supply before it reaches our shores. This year, the Coast Guard took possession of more than 360,000 pounds of South American cocaine—an alltime record.

To help Americans break the chains of addiction, we've built strong partnerships with faith-based and community groups. These groups open minds and change hearts in a way no government bureaucracy can, so my administration has supported their life-changing work. Through our Access to Recovery program, addicts receive vouchers they can redeem at treatment centers of their choice, including faith-based centers. So far, this program has helped more than 260,000 addicts along the path toward clean lives.

Taken together, our efforts to reduce demand, cut supply, and help people break the chains of addiction are yielding measurable results. Over the past 7 years, marijuana use by young people has dropped by 25 percent. Methamphetamine use by young people is down by 50 percent. And the use of cocaine, hallucinogens, steroids, and alcohol by America's youth are all on the decline. Overall, illegal drug use by Americans is down by 25 percent, meaning we have helped approximately 900,000 young people stay clean.

These statistics reflect successful government policies. They also represent the courage and compassion of Americans who are determined to help their fellow citizens win their struggle against drugs. On Thursday, I met with some of these people at the White House, and I am inspired by their stories.

I was especially interested in a young man named Josh. At age 19, Josh had never touched drugs or alcohol. He had a promising life and career ahead of him. Yet after a car accident left him injured and unable to work, Josh started abusing alcohol and cocaine. He put his marriage and career in jeopardy. Eight different treatment programs failed to turn his life around, but the intervention of his grandmother, the support of his wife, and the loving influence of God did. Today, this young man is free of drugs. He's a caring husband and father. And Josh Hamilton of the Texas Rangers is one of the best players in Major League Baseball. More importantly, he and his wife Katie make time to share their blessings. Through their ministry, they're helping other Americans avoid the suffering their family endured.

Josh Hamilton shows that the devastation of drug addiction can happen to anyone, but that with faith and determination, anyone can turn a life around. So today I ask every American with a drug or alcohol problem to seek treatment, because your life is precious to the people who love you. Our Nation needs

your contributions, and there is a more hopeful future ahead. I ask all Americans to reach out to your neighbors in need and do your part to help our Nation win the fight against illegal drugs.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 6:55 a.m. on December 12 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 13. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 12 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Jalal Talabani of Iraq in Baghdad, Iraq

December 14, 2008

President Talabani. Today we have the pleasure and honor of receiving our great friend for Iraqi people, President George W. Bush, who helped us to liberate our country and to reach this day, which we have democracy, human rights, and prosperity gradually in our country. Thanks to him and to his courageous leadership that we are here now in this building.

So we are very glad really to have him with us, and we discussed with him all our problems very frankly and friendly. And we hope that we will continue friendship with him, even he'll be back in Texas.

President Bush. Yes, sir. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you and the Vice Presidents for greeting me. I've known these men for a long time, and I have come to admire them for their courage and for their determination to succeed. I am also here to herald the passage of the SFA/SOFA as a reminder of our friendship and as a way forward to help the Iraqi people realize the blessings of a free society.

And the work hasn't been easy, but it has been necessary for American security, Iraqi hope, and world peace. And so, Mr. President, thank you for your friendship, and thank you for your hospitality. I'm looking forward to meeting all the folks who are involved in the political process—leading this political process. And I am just so grateful

that I had a chance to come back to Iraq before my Presidency ends.

President Talabani. You are welcome.

President Bush. Thank you.

President Talabani. They want a picture with you, Mr. President.

President Bush. Oh, absolutely.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:01 p.m. at the Salam Palace. In his remarks, he referred to Vice Presidents Tariq al-Hashimi and Adil Abd Al-Mahdi of Iraq. The President also referred to SFA, the strategic framework agreement; and SOFA, the status of forces agreement.

Remarks at a Signing Ceremony for the Strategic Framework Agreement and the Status of Forces Agreement and an Exchange With Reporters in Baghdad

December 14, 2008

Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq.

In the name of God the Merciful and Compassionate. I would like to welcome the President of the United States, President George W. Bush. I would like to welcome you here as a guest of Iraq. You have stood by Iraq and the Iraqi people for a very long time, starting with the—getting rid of the dictatorship, to fight—helping the Iraqis to fight terrorism.

Your visit today to Iraq, Mr. President, comes after the signing of the agreement between the two countries, which represents the solid foundation and draws a roadmap that will govern and guide the relationship between the two states.

I believe that Iraq, we have performed and have done great work in a cooperative and integrated way in fighting terror. We have succeeded in Iraq, and we hope that efforts also around the world will succeed in defeating terrorism.

Today, Iraq is moving forward in every field. Through the new Iraqi political system, we are working very hard through this, as well as developing the Iraqi economy, and reconstruction of Iraq. We are doing all of this in order for Iraq to restore its rightful place among nations and among the world, and away from the previous reckless policies